DECISION
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – MANAGEMENT OF COYOTE, DOG, AND RED FOX PREDATION ON LIVESTOCK IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) program completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for reducing coyote (*canis latrans)*, dog (*canis familiaris*), and red fox (*vulpes vulpes*) damage to livestock and threats to public health and safety in Virginia in April 2002 (USDA 2002). A Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was subsequently signed on May 8, 2002. The purpose of this new Decision/FONSI is to facilitate planning, interagency coordination, and the streamlining of program management; and to clearly communicate with the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts of the program since 2002.

The EA evaluated the need for WS activities and the relative effectiveness of five alternatives to meet that need, while accounting for the potential environmental effects of each alternative. The action selected by WS was to "Continue the Current Federal Virginia Cooperative Coyote Damage Control Program (VCCDCP)/ Integrated Wildlife Damage Management." An Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDM) approach would be implemented which would allow use of any legal technique or method, used singly or in combination, to meet requestor needs for resolving conflicts with coyotes, dogs, or fox. The EA is tiered to the WS programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (USDA 1997). Copies of the EA and 2002 Decision/FONSI are available for review from USDA/APHIS/WS, P.O. Box 130, Moseley, Virginia 23120. Copies of the EIS are available from the USDA/APHIS/WS Operational Support Staff, 4700 River Road, Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737-1234.

Wildlife Services is the Federal program authorized by law to reduce damage caused by wildlife (Act of March 2, 1931 [46 Stat. 1468; 7 U.S.C. 426-426b] as amended, and the Act of December 22, 1987 [101 Stat. 1329-331, 7 U.S.C. 426c]). Wildlife damage management is the alleviation of damage or other problems caused by or related to the presence of wildlife, and is recognized as an integral part of wildlife management (The Wildlife Society 1992). WS uses an IWDM approach, commonly known as Integrated Pest Management (WS Directive 2.105), in which a combination of methods may be used or recommended to reduce damage. WS wildlife damage management is not based on punishing offending animals, but as one means of reducing damage and is used as part of the WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992, USDA 1997, WS Directive 2.201). All WS wildlife damage management activities are in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, policies, orders and procedures, including the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Consistency

The analyses in the EA demonstrate that Alternative 1: 1) best addresses the issues identified in the EA, 2) provides safeguards for public health and safety, 3) provides WS the best opportunity to reduce damage while providing low impacts on non-target species, and 4) balances the economic effects to property and agricultural resources.

Monitoring

The Virginia WS program will annually review its impacts on issues identified in the EA to ensure that WS program activities do not impact the viability of target and non-target wildlife species populations. In addition, the EA will be reviewed each year to ensure that it and the analysis are sufficient.

Public Involvement

The pre-decisional EA was prepared and released to the public for a 44-day comment period (December 26, 2001 – February 9, 2002) by a legal notice in three newspapers with circulation throughout Virginia

(*The Richmond Times Dispatch, The Roanoke Times, and The Washington Times)* and was also mailed directly to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in the proposed program. WS received 346 comment letters from the public involvement process and review of the pre-decisional EA. Some of these letters were duplicates that were sent as both letters and as e-mails. All comments were analyzed to identify substantial issues and alternatives. All letters and responses are maintained in the administrative file located at the Virginia Wildlife Services State Office in Moseley, VA. A summary of comments received from review of the pre-decisional EA and the corresponding WS responses can be found in Appendix A of the 2002 Decision/FONSI. These documents can be viewed on the WS website listed below. Additionally, the availability of the 2002 Decision/FONSI and the EA were advertised by legal notices in three Virginia newspapers (*The Richmond Times Dispatch, The Roanoke Times, and The Washington Time*) in June 2002.

The EA, the 2002 Decision/FONSI, and this new 2007 Decision/FONSI are being made available for public review and comment through a legal notice in the *Richmond Times Dispatch* and by direct mailing to agencies, organizations, and individuals with probable interest in the proposed program. The new 2007 Decision/FONSI will also be available for review on the WS website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml. New issues or alternatives raised after publication of public notices will be fully considered to determine whether the EA and its Decision should be revisited and, if appropriate, revised.

Major Issues
The EA describes the alternatives considered and evaluated using the identified issues. The following issues were identified as important to the scope of the analysis (40 CFR 1508.25).

1. Effects on coyote and red fox populations
2. Effects on nontarget wildlife populations including threatened and endangered (T&E) species
3. Effects on dogs
4. Effects on human health and safety
5. Impacts to stakeholders, including aesthetics

In addition to the identified major issues considered in detail, two other issues were considered but not in detail with rationale and further analysis.

Affected Environment
The proposed action will affect private, state, federal, and county lands where coyote, dog, and fox activities could cause or have caused damage to livestock.

Summary of WS VCCDCP Activities
From fiscal year (FY)2002- FY2006, the Virginia WS program continued to provide technical assistance and operational damage management assistance to cooperators. During this period, the Virginia WS program lethally removed 1,730 coyotes, 28 red fox, and 70 dogs by shooting, trapping, M-44's, and Livestock Protection Collars (LPC's), to alleviate predation on livestock. An additional 339 red fox were unintentionally taken during VCCDCP activities. WS also conducted 983 technical assistance projects (WS Management Information System (MIS) FY2002-FY2006). Technical assistance included personal consultations, written or telephone consultations, instructional sessions, exhibits, and site visits.

Alternatives Analyzed in Detail
Five potential alternatives were developed to address the issues identified above (see Major Issues section). Two additional alternatives were considered, but were not analyzed in detail. A detailed discussion of the

anticipated effects of the alternatives on the issues is contained in the EA. The following summary provides a brief description of each alternative.

Alternative 1. Continue the Current Federal VCCDCP Program/ Integrated Wildlife Damage Management. The proposed action is to continue the current portion of the WS program that responds to requests for VCCDCP to protect livestock from coyote, dog, and fox predation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. An IWDM approach would be implemented which would allow use of any legal technique or method, used singly or in combination, to meet requestor needs for resolving conflicts with coyotes, dog, or fox (see Appendix B of the EA). Cooperators requesting assistance would be provided with information regarding the use of effective nonlethal and lethal techniques. Lethal methods used by WS would include shooting, calling and shooting, trapping, snares, dogs, Gas Cartridges, M-44's, or Livestock Protection Collars. Nonlethal methods used by WS may include strobe sirens and placing guard dogs. In many situations, the implementation of nonlethal methods such as guard dogs, llamas, or donkeys, fencing, moving livestock to other pastures, birthing in buildings, night penning, habitat alteration, herders, and scare devices are best implemented by livestock producers and would be the responsibility of the requestor to implement. VCCDCP by WS would be allowed in the State, when requested, on private or public lands (e.g., state) where a need has been documented, upon completion of an *Agreement for Control*. All management actions would comply with appropriate federal, state, and local laws.

Alternative 2. Nonlethal VCCDCP Only By WS. Under this alternative, only nonlethal direct control activities and technical assistance would be provide by WS to resolve coyote, dog, or fox predation on livestock damage. Persons receiving nonlethal technical assistance could still resort to lethal methods that were available to them. Lethal control methods which could be implemented by the public are shooting, calling and shooting, trapping, snares, dogs, and Gas Cartridges. M-44's and Livestock Protection Collars are only available for use by WS employees. Therefore, use of these chemicals by private individuals and state and local government agency personnel would be illegal. Appendix B of the EA describes a number of nonlethal methods available for use by WS under this alternative.

Alternative 3. Technical Assistance Only. This alternative would not allow for WS operational VCCDCP in Virginia. WS would only provide technical assistance and make recommendations when requested. Producers, property owners, state or local government agency personnel, or others could conduct VCCDCP using traps, shooting, calling and shooting, snares, Gas Cartridges, or any nonlethal method that is legal. Currently, M-44's and Livestock Protection Collars are only available for use by WS employees. Therefore, use of these chemicals by private individuals and state and local government agency personnel would be illegal. Appendix B of the EA describes a number of methods that could be employed by private individuals or other agencies after receiving technical assistance advice under this alternative.

Alternative 4. Lethal VCCDCP Only By WS. Under this alternative, only lethal direct control services and technical assistance would be provided by WS. Technical assistance would include making recommendations to livestock producers to allow them to take coyotes, dogs, and foxes by lethal methods. Requests for information regarding nonlethal management approaches would be referred to VDGIF, VDACS, local animal control agencies, or private businesses or organizations. Individuals or agencies might choose to implement WS lethal recommendations, implement nonlethal methods or other methods not recommended by WS, contract for WS direct control services, use contractual services of private businesses, use volunteer services of private organizations, or take no action. In some cases, control methods employed by others could be contrary to the intended use or in excess of what is necessary. Not all of the methods listed in the EA's Appendix B as potentially available to WS would be legally available to all other agencies or individuals (e.g., M-44's and Livestock Protection Collars).

Alternative 5. No Federal WS VCCDCP. This alternative would eliminate Federal involvement in VCCDCP in Virginia. WS would not provide direct operational or technical assistance and requesters of WS services would have to conduct their own VCCDCP without WS input. M-44's and Livestock Protection Collars are only available for use by WS employees. Therefore, use of these chemicals by private individuals and state and local government agency personnel would be illegal. Gas Cartridges could be used by private individuals and state and local government agency personnel.

Alternatives Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

Compensation for wildlife damage losses: The compensation alternative would direct all Virginia WS program efforts and resources toward the verification of livestock losses from coyotes, foxes, and dogs, and to providing monetary compensation for these losses. Virginia WS activities would not include any operational damage management or technical assistance.

This option is not currently available to Virginia WS because WS is directed and authorized by law to protect American agricultural and natural resources, property and public health and safety (Animal Damage Control Act of 1931, as amended; and the Rural Development, Agricultural and Related Agencies Appropriation Act of 1988). Analysis of this alternative in USDA (1997) shows that it has many drawbacks:

- Compensation would not be practical for public health and safety problems,
- It would require larger expenditures of money to investigate and validate all losses, and to determine and administer appropriate compensation,
- Timely responses to all requests to assess and confirm losses would be difficult, and many losses could not be verified,
- Compensation would give little incentive to limit losses through other management strategies,
- Not all resources managers/owners would rely completely on a compensation program and unregulated lethal control would probably continue and escalate,
- Neither Congress nor the Commonwealth of Virginia has appropriated funds for a compensation program.

USDA (1997) cites four studies where sheep losses to predators were documented with no damage management program in place. Annual predation loss rates during these studies varied from 6.3-29.3% for lambs and 0 to 20.8% for adult sheep. However, for purposes of this analysis, we will conservatively assume that loss rates for sheep and lambs could be expected to be 7% and 17%, respectively, in the absence of a damage management program. Data provided by NASS (2006) estimated a total of 37,000 sheep (adult ewes) and 49,000 lambs in Virginia. Using the estimated loss rates of 7% for sheep and 17% for lambs, and the average value per head of $149 (NASS 2006), the potential losses for sheep and lambs in Virginia in the absence of a livestock protection program would be approximately $1.63 million. Therefore, the compensation program alternative would require $1.63 million in funding to cover just the sheep and lamb losses. This $1.63 million does not include expenditures for administration and investigation for the validation of losses.

Coyote Bounties: Legislation was passed in the 1999 Session of the Virginia General Assembly authorizing counties the option of establishing their own coyote bounty system. Currently, 16 counties in Virginia participate in the bounty system. Payment of funds for killing coyotes (bounties) is not supported by WS because:

- Bounties are not effective in reducing damage,
- Circumstances surrounding take of animals is largely unregulated,

- No process exists to prohibit taking of animals from outside the damage management area for compensation purposes,
- County employees that check in coyotes may mistake dogs and foxes as coyotes,
- Coyote bounties have a long history (>100 years in the U.S.) of use in many states without ever achieving the intended results of reducing damage and population levels (Parker 1995).

Environmental Consequences

Wildlife Services has reviewed the EA and has determined that the environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment from activities conducted pursuant to the EA will continue to be insignificant, and that no substantive changes in the analysis are necessary at this time. The following is a brief summary of potential impacts for each of the major issues analyzed in the EA.

Effects on coyote and red fox populations: The EA concluded that the effects of WS VCCDCP activities would be insignificant. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), the agency with authority for management of resident wildlife species in Virginia, has classified the coyote as a nuisance species and there are no restrictions on sport harvest and depredation harvest in Virginia. Although restrictions on the coyote harvest do not exist, the coyote population and harvest continue to increase each year (M. Fies, VDGIF, pers. comm. 2007) (Wright et al. 2000, Wright et al. 1999, Wright and Emerald 1998, Wright and Emerald 1997, Wright and McFarland 1996, and Wright 1995).

From FY2002 - FY2006, the Virginia WS program removed 1,730 coyotes to alleviate predation on livestock (Table 1). The private harvest, as reported by the VDGIF, for this period (based on harvest estimates from the 2001-2002 and 2004-2005 harvest seasons) included 44,032 coyotes (M. Fies, VDGIF, pers. comm. 2007). Cumulatively, the total kill of coyotes from the regulated harvest season (2004-2005) and WS damage management activities was 45,762 coyotes (Table 1). Thus, WS coyote kill represents only 3.8% of the cumulative harvest estimate for FY2002 – FY2006. WS used population trend analysis as an index of the magnitude of the harvest. Population trend analysis indicates coyote populations are increasing, thus the magnitude of impact is low (USDA 2002). The WS magnitude is based on the fraction of total harvest attributed to the WS program (3.8%).

Table 1. Comparison of WS annual coyote take and annual private harvest in Virginia, FY2002-FY2006.

Fiscal Year (FY)	WS Take	Private Harvest[1]	Total Take	WS Take: % of total take
2002	394	8,506	8,900	4.4
2003	222	8,506	8,728	2.5
2004	407	8,506	8,913	4.6
2005	320	9,257	9,577	3.3
2006	387	9,257	9,644	4.0
Total	**1,730**	**44,032**	**45,762**	3.8

[1]Private harvest reported by VDGIF, based on hunter surveys from the 2001 -2002 harvest season and the 2004 – 2005 harvest season, the latest data available (M. Fies, VDGIF, pers. comm. 2007).

The private harvest of coyotes is difficult to estimate because many harvested animals are not reported. The harvest estimate is based on a 95% confidence interval. If the lower limit of the 95% confidence interval for the 2004-2005 coyote harvest were used, instead of the upper limit used in the preceding paragraph, the harvest would be 5,913 coyotes instead of 9,257 (M. Fies, VDGIF, pers. comm. 2007). If this lower harvest estimate were used for the analysis of private harvest from 2002 – 2006, the total private harvest would be 29,565 coyotes rather than 44,032 as discussed above. Thus, the 1,730 coyotes taken by

WS over this same period would equate to 5.5% of the total take. The magnitude of impact would still be low based on increasing coyote population trends and low levels of take by WS.

From FY2002 – FY2006, a total of 367 red fox were taken by the Virginia WS program during VCCDCP activities. Of these, 28 were intentionally removed to protect livestock and 339 were unintentionally taken during VCCDCP program activities. The Virginia WS program also removed 369 red fox from FY2002 – FY2006 as part of other WS program activities (i.e. protecting aviation and protecting threatened and endangered species which are covered under separate EAs), bringing the total WS statewide take to 736 red fox (Table 2). WS has not adversely affected the red fox population in Virginia and the analysis in the EA (USDA 2002) indicates that red fox take by WS is minor compared to sport and other depredation take allowed by the VDGIF. The VDGIF, as the agency with management responsibility for wildlife in Virginia, has classified the red fox as a furbearer, in which there are few restrictions on sport and depredation harvest. Although few restrictions on harvest exist in Virginia, red fox harvest has been approximately stable each year (Wright et al. 2000, Wright et al. 1999, Wright and Emerald 1998, Wright and Emerald 1997, Wright and McFarland 1996, and Wright 1995).

WS used population trend analysis as an index of the magnitude of the impact. Population trend analysis indicates red fox populations are stable, thus the WS magnitude of impact is low. The WS impact is based on the fraction of total harvest attributed to the WS program. The number of red fox harvested by hunters from 2002 - 2006 (based on harvest estimates from 2001-2002 and 2004-2005 harvest seasons) was estimated at 84,088 red fox (Table 2). This harvest represents reported hunter harvest as well as the number of fur transactions for red fox trapped. The fur transactions are an underestimate of trapped red fox because not all trapped fox are sold for fur in Virginia. WS killed a total of 736 red fox during this period (total intentional and unintentional take for all WS programs, including the VCCDCP) which would represent 0.90% of the total harvest and would be considered low magnitude of impact.

Table 2. Comparison of WS annual red fox take and the annual private harvest of red fox in Virginia, FY2002 - FY2006.

Fiscal Year (FY)	WS Take during VCCDCP[1]	Total WS Take[2]	Private Harvest[3]	Total Take	All WS Take: % of total take
2002	126	167	18,692	18,859	0.89
2003	55	103	18,692	18,795	0.55
2004	67	134	18,692	18,826	0.71
2005	27	171	14,006	14,177	1.21
2006	92	161	14,006	14,167	1.14
Total	**367**	**736**	**84,088**	**84,824**	0.90

[1]The VCCDCP take of red fox includes both intentional and unintentional take.

[2]The Total WS Take includes red fox taken during VCCDCP activities and all other WS programs (i.e., airports, threatened and endangered species protection).

[3]Private harvest reported by VDGIF, based on hunter surveys from the 2001 -2002 harvest season and the 2004 – 2005 harvest season, the latest data available (M. Fies, VDGIF, pers. comm. 2007). The private harvest is a combination of hunter harvested and trapped animals.

Program activities and their potential impacts on coyote and red fox populations have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. The effects of VCCDCP activities on this issue are expected to remain insignificant.

Effects on non-target wildlife populations, including T&E species: The EA concluded that there would be no probable effects on other wildlife species populations. Program activities and their potential impacts on nontarget species have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. No adverse effects on T&E species were

expected because of mitigation measures which were outlined in the EA (Section 3.4). Four animal species and 3 plant species have been added to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) T&E species list since the review of the list used in the preparation of the EA and signing of the Decision/FONSI in 2002. These species include the following: Cumberland (pearlymussel) bean (*Villosa trabalis)*, American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), Eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis)*, gray wolf (*Canis lupus), Seabeach amaranth (Amaranthus pumilus)*, American chaffseed (*Schwalbea Americana),* and Virginia spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana*). No adverse impacts are expected for any of the T&E species on the current list. Thus, WS' determination of no adverse effect is still valid for the proposed action.

In FY2004, a bald eagle, a federally listed threatened species, was captured in a foot trap during VCCDCP activities and was released unharmed. Although released unharmed, the capture of a T&E species is considered "take" in accordance with Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act. This take was reported to the appropriate USFWS field office. The incidental take of this bald eagle was in accordance with the provisions provided in the 1992 USFWS Biological Opinion (USDA 1997, Appendix F) which found that WS trapping would not jeopardize the continued existence of the bald eagle.

Nontarget wildlife taken unintentionally during VCCDCP program activities from FY2002 – FY2006 are listed in Table 3 below. The cumulative WS take over this 5-year period is shown in comparison to a single harvest season's take by hunters in Virginia (for species with harvest data available). The total 5-year WS take was compared to the private harvest from only one harvest year because harvest data were not available for all of these years and because so few nontarget animals were taken by WS each year. These nontarget species are common throughout Virginia and are not considered to be of low density. WS' removal of nontarget species is not expected to have any cumulative adverse effects on local or statewide populations in the area. WS concluded that the cumulative impact on nontarget species is biologically insignificant to nonexistent and that WS has not adversely affected the viability of any wildlife species populations though VCCDCP activities

Table 3. Nontarget wildlife killed by WS during the VCCDCP FY2002 – FY2006 compared to target wildlife killed by hunters during one regulated harvest season.

Species	Killed by Hunters in a single harvest season[1]	Total Killed by WS FY2002 – FY006
Bobcat (*Lynx rufus rufus)*	3,318	16
Black bear (*Ursus americanus americanus*)	1,633	2
White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus)*	223,198	39
Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteneus)*	14,423	148
Groundhog (*Marmota monax*)	299,662	27
Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)	n/a	205
Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus)*	295,274	5
Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)	115,219	316
Fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger)*	92,433	2
Gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)	704,260	2
Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)	n/a	27
Common raven (*Corvus corax)*	n/a	1
Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris)*	21,338	9
Black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)	n/a	1
Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*)	n/a	1

[1]Harvest data is from 2004 -2005 season, the most recent data available (white-tailed deer, black bear, and wild turkey harvest based on 2006-2007 harvest season).

Program activities and their potential impacts on nontarget wildlife populations and T&E species have not

changed from those analyzed in the EA. The effects on this issue are expected to remain insignificant.

Effects on dogs: The EA concluded that the effects of WS VCCDCP activities on this issue would be insignificant. As stated in the EA, special efforts are made to avoid harming dogs not involved in livestock depredation. The mitigation measures implemented to minimize unintentional take of dogs are described in Chapter 3 of the EA, and measures to reduce the risk from specific VCCDCP methods are provided in Chapter 4 of the EA. Where dogs are killing or injuring livestock, lethal or nonlethal control methods may be implemented by livestock producers, local animal control officers, WS, and others to protect livestock. From FY2002 – FY2006, WS intentionally removed 70 dogs to reduce predation on livestock. An additional 11 dogs were unintentionally taken during VCCDCP activities and 79 dogs were captured and freed unharmed. Dogs that were unintentionally killed by WS were the result of negligence by the dog owners or property owners who failed to keep dogs confined or away from properties where WS was conducting livestock protection activities, despite notification of potential dangers to their dogs. Program activities and their potential impacts on dogs have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. The effects on this issue are expected to remain insignificant.

Effects on human health and safety: The EA concluded that effects on this issue would be insignificant. WS implementation of program activities did not result in any adverse impacts to human health and safety. Program activities and methods and their potential impacts on human health and safety have not changed from those analyzed in the EA. Impacts of the program on this issue are expected to remain insignificant.

Impacts to stakeholders, including aesthetics: The EA concluded the effects on aesthetics would be variable, depending on the damage situation, stakeholders' values towards wildlife, and their compassion for those who are experiencing damage. Overall, however, impacts would be insignificant. Program activities and methods and their potential impacts to stakeholders and aesthetics have not changed from those analyzed in the EA and are insignificant.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The analysis in the EA, the 2002 Decision/FONSI, and this new 2007 Decision/FONSI indicates that there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment as a result of implementing the proposed action (Alternative 1). I agree with this conclusion and, therefore, find that an EIS need not be prepared. As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

1. Coyote, dog, and red fox damage management, as conducted by WS in Virginia, is not regional or national in scope.

2. The proposed action poses minimal risk to public health and safety. Risks to the public from WS methods were determined to be low in a formal risk assessment (USDA 1997, Appendix P).

3. There are no unique characteristics such as park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic areas, or ecologically critical areas that would be significantly affected. Mitigation measures that are part of WS' standard operating procedures and adherence to laws and regulations will further ensure that WS activities do not harm the environment.

4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there is some opposition to wildlife damage management, this action is not highly controversial in terms of size, nature, or effect.

5. Based on the analysis documented in the EA and the accompanying administrative file, the effects of

the proposed damage management program on the human environment are not significant. The effects of the proposed activities are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The proposed action does not establish a precedent for any future action with significant effects.

7. No significant cumulative effects were identified through this assessment. The number of coyotes and red fox taken by WS, when added to the total known take (hunter harvest plus other take), falls well within allowable harvest levels.

8. The proposed activities will not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places nor will it cause a loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. WS determined that the proposed action will not adversely affect Federal- or Virginia State-listed threatened or endangered species.

10. The proposed action will be in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws imposed for the protection of the environment.

Decision

I have carefully reviewed the EA, input resulting from the 2001-2002 public involvement process, the 2002 Decision/FONSI, and this new 2007 Decision/FONSI. I believe the issues identified in the EA would be best addressed through implementation of Alternative 1 (the Proposed Action). Alternative 1 is therefore selected because it offers the greatest flexibility in achieving effectiveness while minimizing cumulative adverse impacts on the quality of the human environment with respect to the issues raised for consideration in this process. The WS program will implement the proposed action in compliance with all applicable standard operating procedures in Chapter 3 of the EA. This Decision/FONSI will take effect 30 days after publication of a Legal Notice making the EA, the 2002 Decision/FONSI, and this new 2007 Decision/FONSI available to the public for review and comment. New issues or alternatives raised after publication of public notices will be fully considered to determine whether the EA and its Decision should be revisited and, if appropriate, revised, or if a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS should be issued.

For additional information regarding this decision, please contact USDA/APHIS/WS, P.O. Box 130, Moseley, Virginia 23120.

5/18/07

Charles S. Brown
APHIS-WS
Eastern Region Director

Date

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